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Histories of Harrow highways

HARROW ON THE HILL

Volume 6 « 65p » R.S.Brown

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THE SKETCHES OF HARROW ON THE HILL

The author's special thanks are due to FLOYD NASH for his delightful sketches in the centre pages and on the front cover: to JOHN STANAWAY for his picture of the High Street in 1876. The sketch of the Church of Our Lady and St Thomas of Canterbury was reproduced with the permission of the Reverend Charles McGowan.

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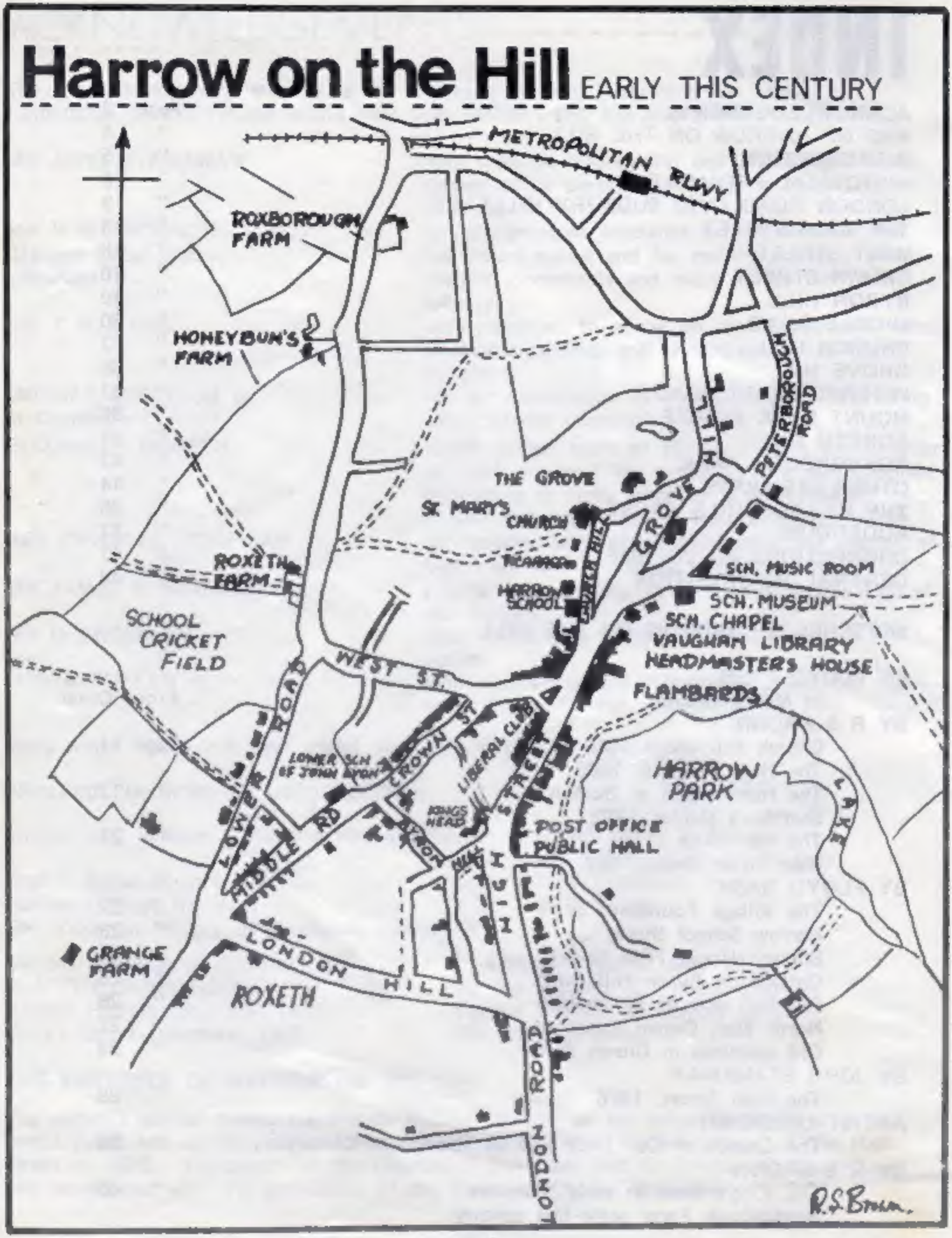

Introduction

"High on thine hill as high as Fame's proud crest,
A thousand memories haunting thine old pale,
The domes of learning smiling on thine breast,
Whose graven walls breathe many a world-wide tale!
Thy emerald robes, bright, trailing to the vale -
Thy starry meads, nursed by the dews of even -
Whilst, crowning all - the stranger's eye to hail,
Thine hallowed fane with tender spire upriven,
Stands like a hoary martyr pleading to high Heaven!

Thrive, noble Harrow! mould thy future men -
Uphold the seaborn Island of the West,
Her men of sword - the sceptre - and the pen,
Made men by thee, and with thy blessing blest."

P.A.

Harrow on the Hill is unique both in its geographical situation and for its long, historical past: an active group of local conservationists are now concerned about its present image and its preservation for the future.

There can be few locations where more feet of the famous (or famous-to-be) have trodden: Harrow - together with Eton - denotes a place where only the most superior of Britain's juveniles may assemble to endure a rigorous standard of education, which excels that offered by the state schools, and indeed, by many other public schools.

In addition to Harrow School, there are numerous other historical landmarks on the Hill such as St Mary's Church and the King's Head Hotel. As we traverse the highways of the Hill, brief information about these and other establishments of interest will be included in the narratives.

The famous Hill is not merely an elevated area of ancient highways and historical buildings; it is also, in a sense, a national shrine which attracts thousands of visitors annually, many of whom come more as pilgrims to catch a glimpse of the school where the great Churchill gained an education for what was to be one of the most exciting careers in the history of British politics.

Our historical brief dictates that we shall largely confine our remarks to the histories of the highways on the Hill and no attempt will be made to compete with other well-informed writers of Harrow history who have tackled the subject in a more comprehensive fashion. When writing about a famous place, the problem with which the author is beset is how to approach it, in the literary sense, from a new and intriguing angle without omitting vital historical facts. Only the reader will be able to judge whether this intention has been successfully achieved.

Historical Preamble

It would be an interesting introduction to Harrow's history if it could be said that millions of years ago a violent eruption occurred in a region of what the Saxon s were to call 'Middlesex', as a result of which this isolated spur known as Harrow Hill evolved.

The origin of this huge mound (which rears 405 feet above sea level) was however, according to geologists, somewhat less startling: it is in fact a residual heap of chalk topped by clay and sand, which remained after the upper levels of the surrounding land had been eroded by the action of wind and weather during aeons of time.

In 1816, when a well was sunk at the junction of High Street and West Street, the shaft descended well over 400 feet revealing the various strata described in the previous paragraph. The land surrounding the Hill has been found to consist of layers of Bagshot Sands supported by Claygate Beds about 50 feet in thickness. A well-known geologist expressed the opinion that Harrow Hill is hundreds of thousands of years older than Stanmore Hill.

The Hill of Harrow may not have been among the most prior areas of habitation as other regions of Britain had been endowed by nature with soil of a lighter composition and this advantage for the earliest agriculturists, together with the availability of game and water, encouraged prehistoric tribes and subsequent inhabitants to settle in communities which closely resembled villages. Many such villages survived suecessive invasions long before the advent of the Norman Conquest in 1066. Old documents mention Harrow some three hundred years earlier, at the time of Offa the Mighty, King of Mercia, who attempted, unsuccessfully, to unite the divided Kingdoms of Saxon England.

When the Anglo-Saxons first invaded Britain in the 5th century, they consisted of Pagan races: having gradually established their alien way of life and cleared large areas of forest for farming, they adopted the Christian faith and formed a United Church, thanks to the efforts of the missionary, St Augustine.

Although there is no factual evidence to support the assumption, the Saxons probably built a church on the Hill since, as the Normans later confirmed, the elevated situation provided a commanding site for a place of worship, in addition to being well-drained and easily protected. Their homes were also built on the heights while the land around the base of the Hill was ploughed for farming.

By modern standards the Saxon village would have been little more than a group of crude, one-roomed cottages made of wood and thatched with reeds. Smoke emitted through a hole in the roof from a central fire. Rough tracks were the only highways; there were no pavements and carters and horsemen drove wherever they pleased.

The last Saxon King was Edward the Confessor who was instrumental in encouraging the development of traditional Anglo-Saxon arts and crafts: on his death in 1066 he was succeeded by Harold, his brother-in-law. At that period in history the English were an affluent race and afforded any likely invader a rich prize.

William, Duke of Normandy could not resist the temptation to invade and in October 1066 he crossed the English Channel to defeat Harold's exhausted Saxon army (which had force-marched 250 miles to do battle) at Telham Hill, near Hastings in East Sussex. Harold was killed in battle and the victorious 'William the Conqueror' continued his successful penetration of the Saxon Kingdom.

The recorded history of Harrow really began with the Domesday Survey of 1086 following the Norman occupation. Middlesex was divided into six areas called 'hundreds' and Harrow - then called Herges - was in the Hundred of Gore (from the Anglo-Saxon word 'gara' meaning a triangular piece of land).

William introduced the feudal system of domination and Middlesex consisted of about 100 manors of which Harrow was the largest; it belonged to the See of Canterbury. The total population of Harrow at that time was between 600 and 700 people in addition to the Archbishop's servants, labourers, smithy, shepherd, miller, thatcher, tiler, cobbler and other artisans.

The population of Harrow gradually increased during the medieval centuries but living conditions for the working classes were frequently appalling. The village highways were often impassable during winter months and domestic habitations lacked every form of desirable hygiene and sanitation. In the 16th century a Dr Francis, physician to Cardinal Wolsey reported on a survey he made about conditions in London and the surrounding villages. He said "Builders are totally regardless concerning the aspect of their doors and windows to the east or north ..... the windows are full of chinks through which enters percolated air, which stagnates in the room and is more noxious than the wind.

"As to floors, they are usually made of clay, covered with rushes, which are so slightly removed now and then that the lower part remains for twenty years together, and in it a collection of spittle, filth from dogs and men, beer, scraps of fish and other filthiness not to be named".

It was not surprising that plagues frequently wiped out large sections of the population; at this period in history the average life expectancy was only 38 years. Very little had been learned from the terrible effects of the Black Plague which swept across England in 1348, decimating a third of the three million strong population in the most appalling fashion.

In 1545 Archbishop Cranmer gave the Manor of Harrow to Henry VIII in exchange for other lands. He, in turn, granted it to Sir Edward (later Lord) North two years later: it remained in possession of the North family until 1630.

After Henry dissolved the monasteries in 1539, few new churches were built during the Tudor era and architectural skills were diverted into the designing of vast country homes for Royalty and the rich element of society. Hatfield House and Swakeleys at Hillingdon remain as fine examples of Elizabethan and Jacobean architecture but the existing large houses on Harrow Hill such as The Grove, Flambards and The Park are of 18th and 19th century vintage.

Harrow does, nevertheless, belong historically, to the Tudors for it was in 1572 that Queen Elizabeth granted a Royal Charter to John Lyon, a wealthy yeoman farmer from the nearby hamlet of Preston, for the foundation of a free grammar school, later to become Harrow School.

In 1630 the Manor of Harrow, together with the sub-manors of Woodall, Headstone and Roxeth, passed into the possession of Edmund Phillips and George and Rowland Pitt: in the second half of the 17th century the heiress of the Pitts married James Rushout who - after receiving a Knighthood - was created Lord Northwick in 1797. The estates remained in the family until the present century.

The Tudors may have given Harrow their Royal approval but it was the 19th century Victorians who rebuilt and refashioned the crumbling facades of village property. They also erected numerous original buildings in true Victorian style, the most incredible of which must surely be 'Druries' at the foot of Church Hill.

With the onset of the 20th century, village life continued to revolve around the School and the large houses owned by the wealthier families. But an insidious social change was to gradually affect the inhabitants of the Hill: the days of the artisans were numbered and inter-dependence of School and community would diminish for reasons stated in later narratives.

The highways were however, gradually improving, although the winding, sloping aspect of roads on the Hill presented special problems for the increasing weight of traffic.

In the 1970's, controversies about the application of traffic control reverberate across the Hill and one school of thought believes that unless the right decisions are made, Harrow on the Hill will gradually assume the image of a ghost town. Conservation is also a critical subject and many residents are determined to prevent developers desecrating the skyline with modern, faceless flats, thereby accentuating the gregarious nature of this community and destroying forever the highways which reflect the picturesque profile of a bygone age.

Thomas Cranmer

Edward North

London Road (and SUDBURY HILL)

Before we ascend Harrow Hill for a road-by-road narration of its history, it is logical to first consider the eventful past of the main approach road from London. Harrow Road stretches from the capital to the base of the incline where it joins Sudbury Hill - and the latter name changes to London Road on the summit.

Ogilby's map of 1675 indicates that there was a main route from the Hill to London known as the London or Harrow Way which crossed Sudbury Common, skirted Greenford and travelled on to the city via Harlesden and Paddington.

A route had in fact existed nearly two centuries earlier for there is evidence to show that prominent local citizens made provision in their wills for the upkeep of the road. The main burden of repair was borne by the Parishes through which the road passed and farmers were expected to provide men for labouring duties for six days in each year.

In the first half of the 18th century nearly four hundred Acts were passed concerned with the roads of Britain but the state of the Harrow Road continued to be deplorable and travellers from Harrow frequently approached London via Acton where conditions were somewhat better. Between 1751 and 1790 a further 1,600 highway Acts were introduced and turnpikes were used for the first time to ensure that road-users paid towards the maintenance.

In 1801 a turnpike trust was set up for the Harrow Road and a toll-gate was erected near Harrow Pound. The trust funds were misused however, and in 1823 Macadam's son, who was then a surveyor, described the road from Harrow on the Hill to Harlesden as "circulous, dangerously narrow and confined by high banks with plantations and houses with turnings at almost rightangles".

In 1826 the trust was absorbed by the Metropolitan Roads Commission; the highway was treated with a stone surface and the gradient reduced on Harrow Hill. Because Harrow on the Hill was virtually a 'dead end', the highway was not excessively used and remained in a reasonable state of repair during Victoria's reign.

During the 18th century few new properties were built on this approach to the Hill but in the latter half of the 19th century numerous houses, some of large proportions, appeared on both sides of the highway including The Gerards, Lincoln House, Highlands, Parkside, Longridge, Moat Lodge, Kingsley House, Edgehill, Uplands and West Acre. The properties from numbers 7 to 17 were once known as 'Gothic House' and provided boarding facilities for Harrow schoolboys under the Reverend G F Harris.

There were 22,000 miles of good turnpike roads with nearly 8,000 toll gates in Britain by the mid 19th century but Harrow continued to function as a sleepy, quaint old village, safe in its unique isolation, away from busier thoroughfares.

In the nineteen-seventies, if one can successfully ignore the motorised traffic, a journey on foot from the village along London Road can still be a pleasant experience. Many ancient trees line this highway and mellow old buildings (some of which were named earlier in this narrative) are set back amongst the greenery.

Some distance beyond the difficult junction with Roxeth Hill is a small side turning on the right called Mount Park Avenue and on the opposite side is the white-walled Wilmington House; it is at this point that London Road becomes Sudbury Hill.

The road soon begins to dip sharply and the bends which are shortly encountered were no doubt introduced by early road-builders to assist stage coaches to negotiate the Hill; in modern times they constitute a distinct hazard for motorists, particularly in wet weather.

Numerous large properties line both flanks of Sudbury Hill and among them are several which exceed one hundred years in age, including Marston Lodge, Armstrongs, St Andrews and Woodcroft. Two others built very early this century are the White Cottage (by Baillie Scott) and The Orchard. A large, late Georgian property formerly called Sudbury Hill House - and later, Bowden House - was converted into a Sanatorium for Harrow School in 1929.

On the lower slope, the aspect continues to be pleasant and to the right, open ground has a meadow-like appearance. Suddenly the busy Greenford Road appears on the right but our progress is barred by a traffic light complex, beyond which is Harrow Road - in the London Borough of Brent.

Before we return to the summit of the Hill and pass beyond the extremity of London Road where it links up with the most important highway in the elevated village of Harrow (ie the High Street), a few brief thoughts about the problems with which past inhabitants were faced when they went shopping are relevant. Although we may complain - sometimes justifiably - about the inordinate level of inflation which has occurred in the last quarter of the 20th century, earlier residents of Harrow who were far less affluent, faced many hardships when the purchasing power of their limited income was being eroded.

During Henry VIII's reign the cost of food increased by 30% and, after his death, he left a legacy of poor money values which caused prices to double. Elizabeth succeeded in stabilising costs but inflation returned in the mid-17th century: the Georgian era was a time of lavish indulgence by the wealthy while working-class people could wrest only a meagre living from the land. This situation continued to prevail during the Regency period but a new age was launched by Victoria when the 'middle class' came into being and more people than ever before enjoyed regular work and good wages. Despite its relative isolation, Harrow was inevitably affected by the country's varying fortunes over the centuries.

But nature has been generous to the villagers of Harrow in providing benefits not available to the residents of other areas. The remarkable views from the Hill have always been there for all to see - except when the low clouds of winter cap the ridge; the air is invigorating and energizing; the temperature is only fractionally lower than that of central London and annual rainfall does not normally exceed 27 inches.

Those people who climb Sudbury Hill and other inclines, to live on the Hill, do so because they really want to and must believe that the effort is worthwhile, after all, it is easier to remain down below on 'the plain'..... Sudbury Hill (which is one of five conservations areas in and around Harrow village) is so called because of its function as a link road between the township of Sudbury and Harrow on the Hill.

Continued on page 13

Church Hill about 1850 showing the Crown and Anchor (left)

The High Street c.1908

The Hunt meets at
Roxeth nearly
70 years ago

Sheridan's Stables 1795

The High Street

During the earliest days of Christianity in Britain, the belief in God was visibly signified by the presence of a church building. The same indication of Godliness still applies today of course, but 20th century worshippers can arrive at God's House with the help of the combustion engine - whether it powers a private car or public transport. A thousand years or more ago, a Christian may have been fortunate enough to own a horse and perhaps a cart as well, but more than likely he would have made his way to church on foot.

Over the years, the passage of many feet gradually scored paths across the land in the direction of the village church, thus forming a pattern on which the original local highways were based. Around the church were usually clustered a few labourers cottages, an ale house, a smithy and the village shop.

Well defined tracks linking more distant communities had been made in previous centuries by the Ancient Britons, sometimes straightened and paved by the Romans. One such track from Stanmore to Brentford is thought to have crossed Harrow Hill, providing a means of communication with hamlets to the south east and leading on to routes giving access to London for farmers delivering produce, or driving sheep and cattle to city markets.

As the buildings around St Mary's church on the Hill increased in number, the crude track eventually became the main village thoroughfare, later evolving into the familiar winding High Street which visitors now find both quaint and charming.

From the time of its inception as a community of modest dimensions, there were few changes in the living conditions on the Hill until the second half of the 14th century when a new national determinatio in social aspirations began to affect its growth and shape in common with other towns and villages throughout England. It was then that feudal manors began to disintegrate and the payment of wages with money and dwelling leases superseded the provision of servile agricultural labour by workers on the lord's demesne. The forces of personal enterprise and capital became available to a lower class element of society and the organised manufacture of commodities for the domestic market provided a remunerative alternative to farming.

In 1545 Harrow's connection with Canterbury was severed when the Manor surrendered to the Crown and tithes became payable to Oxford College, another action which was to have a significant effect on the future of the village was the granting of a Charter by Queen Elizabeth to John Lyon for the building of a free grammar school on the Hill. The school was not actually built until the beginning of the 17th century at which time the dominant structures were the Church, Rectory and the house called 'Flambards'.

The latter was named after an old Harrow family, an early member of which was financial adviser to William Rufus while Edmund and John Flambard were leaders of Edward III's armies in France. The present house is a three storey building in grey brick and dates from the late 18th century.

When Harrow School was first opened, the route of the High Street followed the incline of the present Church Hill to the churchyard and then descended via a lane known as The Fosse. After the establishment of the School, the High Street was diverted from the Headmaster's House past the Speech Room, this section was formerly known as Lower Church Street.

By the middle of the 18th century the High Street consisted of a continuous frontage between the churchyard and the junction with West Street but beyond the latter, buildings were scattered in an untidy and incohesive fashion. At the southern end of the village could be found the School butts where the annual Archery Competition for the Silver Arrow award took place from 1684. The event was founded by Sir Gilbert Talbot and the competitors, numbering six or twelve, were dressed in special satin costumes. Leading local families were invited to the winner's ball.

Lord Northwick was the major Harrow land owner in the early part of the 19th century and he lived in The Park, a house completed in 1795 by Richard Page: the parkland around the house was landscaped by Capability Brown. In 1831 The Park became a school house after Northwick moved away to Chipping-Camden taking his fine collection of works of art with him. In 1906 an extra storey was added to The Park.

By the middle of the 19th century several other large establishments on the Hill were housing Harrow schoolboys and the High Street had become a prosperous thoroughfare with numerous shops, inns, houses, professional people, a post office and a fire engine house. Prosperity was aided by a period of unusually clement weather. The year 1863 was particularly beneficent in this respect and the Harrow Gazette remarked, "In this glorious summer, lords and ladies, farmers, tradesmen, picnicians and tourists have all had a season of unexampled beauty and profit. The Irish potato harvest is plenteous and soft, warm rains have done wonders for turnips and mangold worsles....."

Although there was no regular lighting in the High Street at this time and good highway surfaces and drainage were still just a dream, city dwellers were becoming increasingly interested in rural Harrow but as the 20th century approached, tarmac main roads for a new innovation - the motor car - assisted the expansion of London towards Harrow.

The High Street was continuing to flourish at the beginning of the 20th century and the medical profession was very prominent. Opposite the old school building was a veritable line of physicians and this stretch of road was sometimes known as 'the second Harley Street'. The Park, Flambards and Moretons (a large 18th century property), were Harrow School houses The last in the row was the medical firm of Bindloss and Lambert, followed by several small shops including a fishmonger, butcher, plumber, boot and watch makers, grocer, a solicitor called Griffiths and Harrow Post Office at number 41, (where a Mr J E Kay was Postmaster): then came three more shops and the Harrow School Board offices followed by a public hall (later remodelled as a cinema). Four properties preceded the entrance to Harrow Park which marked the end of the High Street, beyond this point the highway was designated as 'London Road'.

Crossing to the other side, we begin to re-trace our steps in this turn-of-the-century walk, back towards the village. Before re-entering the shopping area, a china and glass warehouse was passed, followed by a photographic establishment called The Studio (built about a hundred years ago as the first purpose-designed studio of its kind in the country). Passing four more properties, which included yet another physician, brought us

to a corner site on which was situated the London and County Bank (built in the second half of the 19th century), Harrow Fire Station (1888) and the Harrow on the Hill Urban District Council offices, erected at the outbreak of the first world war.

Crossing Byron Hill highway we find the Kings Head, first established in the time of Henry VIII, where the original cellars are still in use. In pre- 1914 days a regular bus service ran between the King's Head and Harrow and Wealdstone station.

Beyond Waldron Road, a small side turning on the left, were nine shops and properties which included tea-rooms, the Cunningham Building Society and a hat and umbrella warehouse. Then came a block of offices which housed the Gazette local newspaper with editions circulating in Harrow, Pinner, Northwood, Wembley and Stanmore. Between these offices and the junction with West Street were a further ten businesses - a printer, furnisher, fancy repository, watch maker, baker (Wright Cooper Bros.), tailor, chemist, foreign stamp merchant, boot maker and hairdresser.

Beyond West Street was the Crown and Anchor Inn (once sited next to the School on Church Hill) followed by a saddler, confectioner, grocer, (Cullens) fruiterer, watch maker, provisioner, chemist, and frame-maker. Next door was Druries, the home of E W Howson - now a school property - and then two further tradesmen, a tailor and an art dealer, before the main complex of school buildings was encountered.

To the modern Harrow visitor - or to residents of recent occupation - the revelation that such an extensive variety of tradesmen existed three generations ago will come as something of a surprise. Furthermore, although the foregoing commentary about the High Street's image over seventy years ago was largely expressed in the past tense, most of the buildings of that time still exist, although many have remodelled facades. There are some instances of changes having occurred at an earlier date: numbers 25 to 35 are reputed to be among the oldest full-timbered buildings in the High Street: Victorian shop frontages were added in the last century, but between 1751 and 1800 it is thought to have been the premises of the Upper King's Head Inn. Currently, number 25 is the Harrow School Printing Works while 29/31 is the Harrow Tuck Shop and 35 was formerly the original 'Upstairs' Ann's Pantry tea-rooms. Apart from several small antique shops which cater for the tourist trade, only a handful of traders are still operating, (including a multiple grocers store - the future of which is in some doubt).

Most of the residents who lived in the High Street three generations ago have died or moved away, to be supplanted by a younger generation of families, (many of whom are dedicated to the preservation of the Hill in its present form).

Between the wars the Hill's administrative function became obsolete, followed by a deterioration in the effectiveness of vital services including those necessary to Harrow School, such as food suppliers, smithy and laundry. The continuing post-war decline of shopping facilities is thought to have been largely due to the withdrawal of tradesmen who feared that the long term intention was to subject the village to pedestrianisation.

As the third decade of this century was entered, the development of townships around the Hill, such as Harrow New Town, South Harrow, North Wembley, and Greenford, was accelerated. After the second war, when the ownership of motor cars extended to the lower middle and working classes, access to these neighbouring shopping centres where large supermarkets and chain stores were becoming established was both easy and

convenient. Thus, the self-sufficiency of the Hill community was effectively undermined and the reduction in the number of licenced premises and places of entertainment which followed, sounded the final death knell of the Hill's role as integral part of Harrow's commercial structure.

Many of the properties previously occupied by tradesmen and various other business establishments have been gradually adapted for residential purposes and this factor - together with the replacement of older houses by small modern dwellings - has had the effect of increasing the population density on the Hill in the third quarter of the 20th century. Thus, with most of the active residents working, seeking entertainment, and shopping in distant locations, the role of Harrow Village has become that of an elevated dormitory area.

THE KING'S HEAD HOTEL

A date on the facade of the present 'Kings Head' proclaims that it was built in 1535 but the existing building is of 18th century vintage, extensively rebuilt in the 19th century.

In Elizabethan times, such Inns were a necessary adjunct of the highway system; they were praised by travellers for their good fare and drink, clean linen and for the convivial atmosphere which greeted guests. Unfortunately, the willing servants - and sometimes mine host himself - were frequently in league with ruffians and highwaymen, and so it was that departing guests with full purses would be relieved of their money by robbers hiding in the thickets farther along the road. The situation was little better two centuries later when regular stage coach services had been introduced on some main highways. Initially, the heavy coaches could travel only at a walking pace and, without proper suspension, frequently overturned when they were easy prey for lurking rogues.

It was 1824 before a daily coach service was operating from the Kings Head but for many generations the Inn had provided useful stabling facilities for visitors and local tradesmen. Up until the early part of the century, Harrow cabmen stabled their horses overnight under the old coach house. The Assembly Rooms adjoining the Kings Head have also seen useful service for a variety of reasons, including the provision of training facilities for professional boxers; 'Gunboat' Smith, heavyweight contender, and Ted 'Kid' Lewis were included in this group.

In December 1857, the Harrow Gazette made a reference to the ageing Inn, as follows: "The old Village is getting quite juvenile..... and has begun to smarten itself up and disguise its many cracks and wrinkles..... the Kings Head has been smitten with the prevailing taste for change....."

The Kings Head has changed hands on numerous occasions and a notice still exists relating to a sale of the premises on 11th June 1895. There is a reference to "the fine avenue of trees which lines the London Road from the Kings Head to the 9th milestone at the foot of Sudbury Hill". In the 1970's, the Kings Head gained some notoriety among women's liberation movements for being an establishment which made provision for a 'men only' bar and there were demonstrations of protest outside the building. The small triangle in front of the Inn is a well-known landmark in the village and it was once the scene of frivolity and festivity when folk gathered to celebrate special

occasions. Between the wars the town goat (which bore a royal name thought to be 'William II') was tethered on the triangle green. The goat, which was the property of the Urban District Council, disappeared at the outbreak of the last war and was replaced by a more inanimate warden's shelter and a National Fire Service water tank.

Almost opposite the triangle is a steak house which has seen remarkable changes over the years. Now number 51 in the High Street, it was built originally as a public hall and a variety of social events were held there in Victorian and Edwardian days. Public dances were popular functions as were horticultural shows and there was also an annual performance by the Police Minstrels. Later its role changed to that of a Music Hall and after closing down for several years was modernised and reopened with increased seating accommodation (for 480 people) as the Hill's own cinema, the 'Elite'. It was later renamed the 'Cosy' and then the 'Cosy-Carlton'. Despite the added attraction of providing a free bus service to bring patrons up the Hill it was closed in 1939 and substantially demolished in 1963. Before cinemas became established in the heart of small communities, the working classes sought their entertainment and relaxation in village halls and public houses: middle class men frequented the political clubs while their women joined knitting and needlework groups. Many rural areas were however, periodically visited by fairs and circuses and Harrow on the Hill village was no exception. Sangers Circus arrived annually in the surrounding fields and was greeted with great excitement, especially by the children.

HARROW SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Because the original Harrow School building is sited on Church Hill (which climbs away at a tangent from the North end of the High Street), our main reference to the School is contained in the narrative about that Hill. But a group of important school buildings are sited in the High Street. First, (on the West Side) is the Old House at number 5. During most of the 18th century it was an Inn called the New Kings Head but now houses the Bursar. Proceeding in a northerly direction, we pass the Headmaster's House rebuilt in the 19th century, after an earlier property was burned down. Next are two imposing buildings designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott early in the second half of the 19th century, namely the Vaughan Library and School Chapel. The Library is an ornate Victorian edifice in the Gothic style and named after a famous Harrow Headmaster, the Reverend Charles Vaughan, who died in 1897. The grey, flint Chapel replaced another, smaller place of worship but prior to 1838 Harrow school boys attended services at St Mary's church.

On the opposite side of the High Street is 'Druries' named after a family which provided several teachers for the School. This is a rather grotesque building by C F Hayward of 1865 vintage with numerous additions in later years. Because of its irregular design and lack of matching architectural features it leaves the visitor wondering whether it is a castle, a Victorian hospital or hotel. As mentioned earlier, it is in fact a school house. The last in this group is the War Memorial Building, attractively situated above a terraced area and designed by Sir Herbert Baker. It was opened in 1926 and is therefore one of the newer school properties. All these buildings have been listed for preservation and the village in its entirety is now defined as a conservation area, (under the Civic Amenities Act, 1967) together with Harrow School and Park.

Some old shops and cottages have, in the course of renovation, disclosed their medieval, wooden origins but the core of the High Street is now a pleasant mixture of psuedo-Regency and Victorian architecture. There is an extensive array of unique, historical detail in the main thoroughfare of Harrow Hill but limited space prevents the mention of every interesting feature in this narrative: perhaps enough has been said to whet the appetite of those who have yet to view the attractions of the High Street and it may assist others who have previously passed through with casual disinterest, to look anew and really appreciate the unique character of this ancient thoroughfare.

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West Street

In the era when the Harrow Hill community was more commercialised, West Street was an important area of village trade. In the 16th century, buildings were confined to the upper region of the street but after the effect of 'Enclosure' in 1803, the village spread to the foot of the hill and by the end of the 19th century, further growth had occurred in side roads with patriotic names like Nelson Road and Victoria, Trafalgar and Wellington Terraces. Roxeth Common once bordered the south side of West Street but the open ground was later divided into small plots upon which cottages were built.

Reference to the annual fair was made in the previous narrative and the village green once situated at the foot of West Street, was the site for this event which lasted for three days at the beginning of September during the Nativity of the Virgin. The fair, which was discontinued in 1872, had been held under a charter granted to Archbishop Boniface by Henry III in 1261 which also made provision for a weekly market on Mondays at the corner of West Street and the High Street.

At the beginning of the 20th century, there were almost thirty tradesmen on the north side of West Street, including all the usual food suppliers as well as a fancy repository upholsterer, tea company, refreshment rooms, monumental mason, and makers of cycles, straw hats, boots, dresses and harnesses. There was also the Mission Hall, District Nurses Home, and the Cricketers Inn on the corner of Nelson Road where the proprietress was Mrs Elizabeth Rogers.

The remnants of the 15th century Pye Powder House which still exist behind the Mission Hall, was once the venue for a Court where summary justice was meted out to travellers visiting the fair with 'dusty feet' - the French interpretation of which was 'pieds poudres' - hence the derivation, Pie Powder Court.

On the other side of West Street were further shops, including Massey the newsagent. This family also provided funeral services (and still does) and coffins were made on premises behind the shop.

On Friday nights the Harrow Gazette was collected from the printers in the High Street: the Gazette was formerly owned by Sir Oswald Mosley, MP for Harrow, until he sold out to the Harrow Observer in 1921.

Other buildings of that time which still stand today are the Liberal Club, Castle Public House (where the proprietor was Mr E G Waters) and the Metropolitan Police Station (X Division). The latter was built by an Uxbridge Company in the classic style over one hundred years ago replacing an older station which stood farther back from the road.

One building not yet mentioned is the old Poor House, built about 250 years ago and later converted into cottages (numbers 31 to 35). It was here that provision was made for destitute members of the village but when death came to them, burial arrangements were frequently inadequate. In a letter to the Harrow Gazette on 2nd October, 1863,

a reader complained, "It is sometimes disgraceful if the undertaker at a pauper's funeral comes to the churchyard without bearers and then leaves the corpse until he can find one. Then they come dressed in all colours and frequently in liquor."

Proceeding down the sharp slope of West Street, the road widens where the old forge was once situated (the building still survives), at which point coaches turned at the conclusion of their journey to allow tired horses to be stabled.

Improving highway surfaces in the 19th century facilitated the introduction of more frequent and comfortable coach services which, together with the expanding railway system, enabled journeys to nearby towns to be undertaken by both the middle and working classes where previously only the wealthier members of the populace could move beyond the confines of their own community.

Ironically, these new facilities heralded the end of village artisans, since the inhabitants could purchase foreign products more cheaply in the towns. The craftsmen who were doomed to disappear included makers of harnesses and agricultural implements, millers, weavers, tailors - and finally the smithies but only after the latter had resisted obsolescence by resorting to more ignominious duties, including the mending of bicycle punctures. As explained on an earlier page, the commercial life of villages such as Harrow was further invalidated by the increasing popularity of the motor car

Standing at the top of West Street in the final quarter of the 20th century, the visitor can peer down the very sharp slope into another era of time. In only a few English towns (such as Rye in Sussex) can the atmosphere of this old highway be experienced. Despite the blank facia of some 'dummy' shop windows and the obvious renovation of other buildings, the local Residents' Association which jealously protects the 19th century image of this ancient thoroughfare, should receive all possible support from the local authority in a combined effort to ward off threats of speculative re-development.

The naming of this street was undoubtedly connected with the fact that it has a westerly aspect.

Crown Street

Having completed the West Street narrative, it is logical to follow on with information about Crown Street; the two highways are closely related, both geographically and historically, and in modern times are under the surveillance of the same area residents' association.

Once again it was the act of enclosing Roxeth Common in the early 1800's which caused the initial growth of this narrow highway. As buildings began to spread down the hill, thus extending the length of West Street, other habitations were built beside a path which turned off at a tangent along the upper edge of the Common During the 18th century further development occurred and the path grew into a thoroughfare then known as Hogarth (later shortened to Hog) Lane.

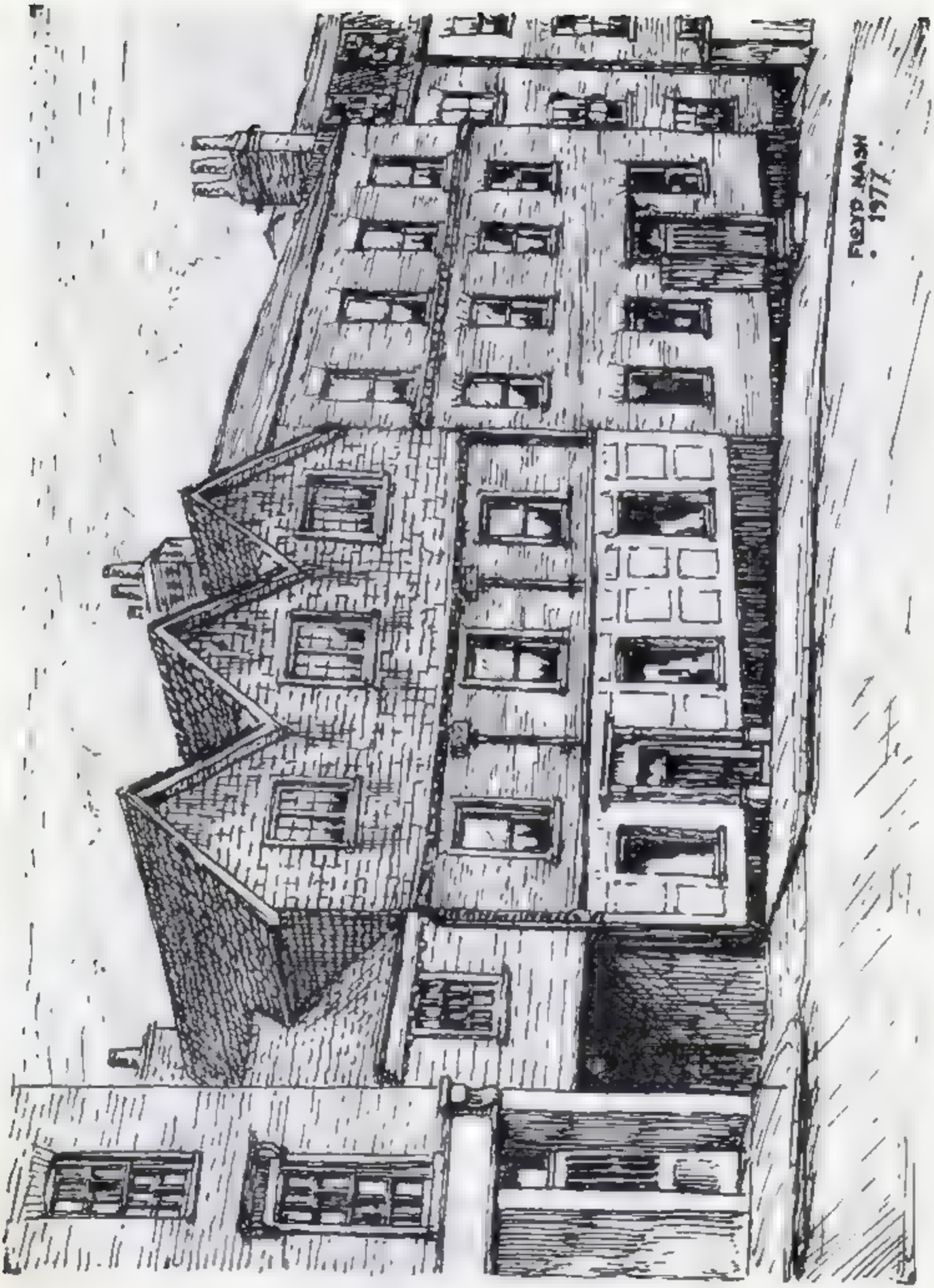
Continued on page 29

Harrow P
House be
the wars
old Pie Powder Court)

West Street about 1907

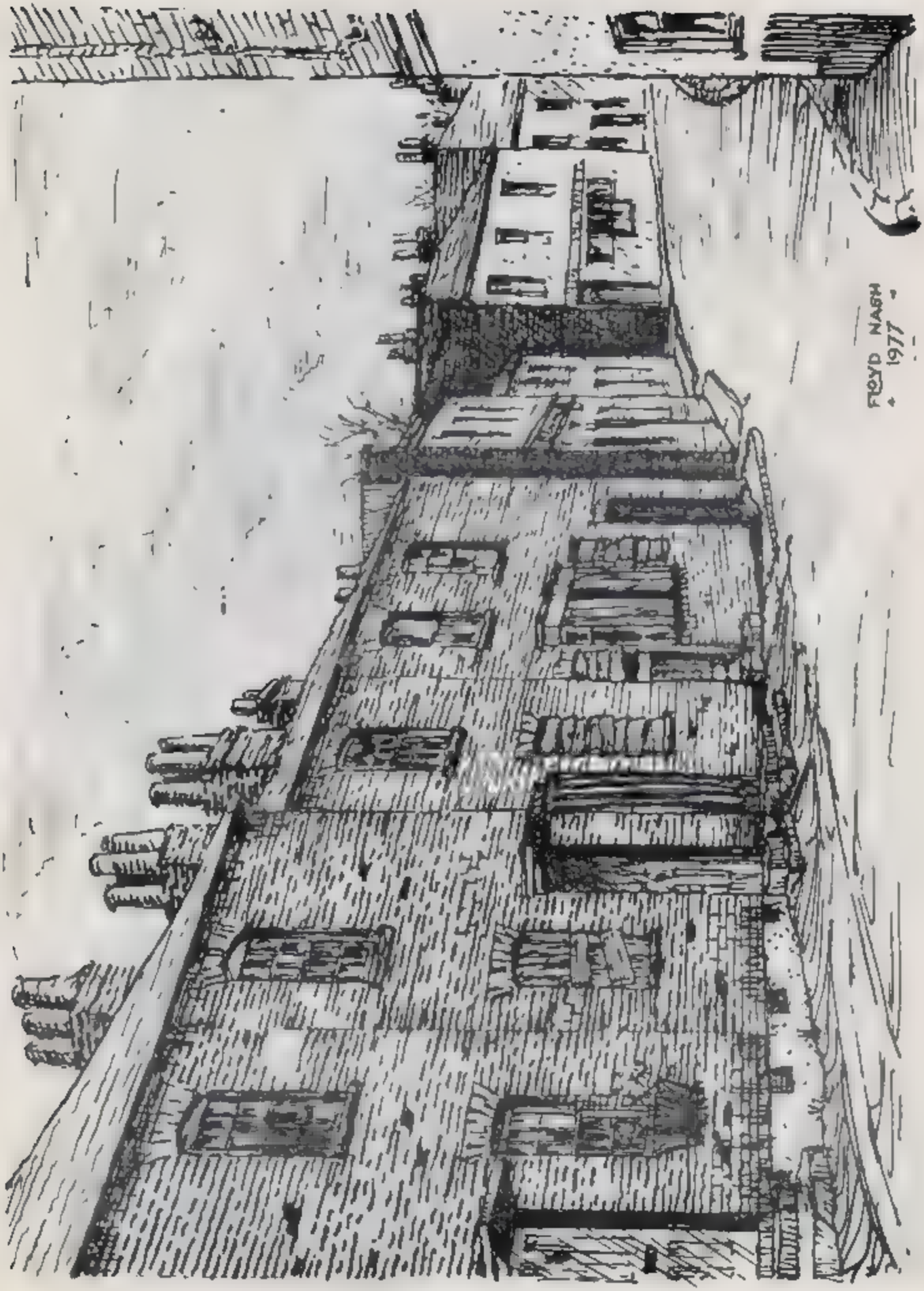
FLOYD NASH - 1977

GIEVES
HARROW
SCHOOL STABLES


Peter Marsh
1977

FLOYD NASH
1977

FLOYD WASH
1977


FLOYD NASH
1977

Drainage has frequently caused problems over the years in certain areas of the Hill, and Hog Lane was particularly troublesome in this respect. History reveals that the flooded state of this Lane in 1848 contributed to a serious cholera epidemic which afflicted the villagers and 15 years later, conditions were again so inclement that young children were unable to negotiate the Lane due to excessive mud and surface water.

At a date after the middle of the 19th century the highway was renamed Crown Street (from its association with the Crown Inn (now demolished)) and its popularity for village shopping expeditions steadily increased. Numerous shops and three inns (the Crown, Bricklayers' Arms and North Star) attracted both villagers and inhabitants from the surrounding hamlets.

We have previously referred to the village as being sleepy and quaint but Saturday nights in Crown Street would have belied this description with its noisy, bustling shoppers and well-filled inns. Crowded thoroughfares do however, provide opportunities for rogues to operate and in the flickering shadows of the cresset lighting, instances of doubtful morality, intimidation and drunkenness could occur. The Harrow School Headmaster of that era therefore decided in favour of putting the street out of bounds to his boys, a restriction which has not been countermanded to this day.

At the beginning of this century, commercial activity was continuing unabated and flanking Crown Street were the following establishments. a draper, greengrocer and fruiterer, tobacconist, baker, bootmaker, butcher, hairdresser, dressmaker, tailor, oil merchant, two coffee shops and chimney sweeps. There was also the Oddfellows Lodge Y.M.C.A. room, Christian Colportage Association and three inns. Many premises have either disappeared or been refashioned as residential habitations but the old North Star building remains although it ceased to function as a public house in 1957 after a history of service extending back for at least 150 years: formally a beerhouse it was rebuilt in 1895 at a time when it was well patronised.

A large residence called Oldfield House once stood at numbers 62/64 Crown Street: thought to have been built in 1792 for the Reverend Benjamin Evans,(an assistant master at Harrow School)various additions were made at later dates and prior to its recent demolition, was the home of the Hewlett family. Another feature which has disappeared was a well at a gateway leading to Yew Walk, opposite the northern end of Crown Street.

In the mid-1970's the street sadly lacks the activity and life of three generations ago and although a pleasing, Dickensian atmosphere still prevails, the section nearest to West Street has a somewhat derelict appearance as several old buildings are boarded up and empty. Apparently these properties are beyond repair but plans have been prepared to erect several small family houses in their place.

The Crown Street and West Street Area Residents' Association made representations to the local authority in 1976 to make known their concern about the form that this redevelopment may take. Shortly afterwards, the planning controller of the London Borough of Harrow gave a written assurance in the Harrow Observer in which he expressed his confidence that the new development would be both attractive in design and suitable to its surroundings. We must all hope that this historical street will soon be fully restored in a way that will be satisfactory to local people.

At the time of writing this narrative, the area residents' association has been expressing concern about the serious lack of car parking facilities and the need for a new system of traffic flow in the Harrow Hill area. The traffic problems of the 20th century would probably horrify the builders of these old highways - if they should ever rise from their graves .....

At the southern end of Crown Street, one emerges into modern surroundings where town houses of more recent date have been erected.

Byron Hill

The map at the beginning of this volume will show that Byron Hill is the fina. 'leg' in the old village highway system which drapes over the south western slope of the Hill. Like Crown Street, this highway was originally a path on the old Common which developed into a road as building increased on both sides.

Unlike the thoroughfares described in the three previous narratives, Byron Hill has always been more residential than commercial and small Georgian and Victorian cottages and houses are still much in evidence.

This road, which slopes sharply away from the Kings Head, is named after the old Harrow boy and famous poet, Lord Byron (1788-1824). there is also Byron House at numbers 29/31 originally of 18th century vintage and once the home of Matthew Arnold. Another property of large proportions is Suffolk House, built late in the first quarter of the 19th century, possibly for Doctor Hewlett, surgeon to Harrow School.

Still standing is a substantial building of gothic design built in 1864 as a Baptists Chapel by Smith and Chapman. There were later extensions and early this century it was used as an annex to the John Lyon School. It s status has been steadily relegated over the years from an ecclesiastical role to that of warehouse, laundry and finally, factory.

In the mid-18th century a brick kiln was located on an adjoining site, operated by the Bodimeads and at about this time, Middle Road came into being, linking Byron Hill and Crown Street with Lower Road. Several modern residences have been added to the flanks of Byron Hill: the rather 'mixed bag' of architecture is however, pleasantly screened during the summer months by mature trees and hedges and the general aspect is both attractive and rural.

Middle Road

As explained in the previous narrative, Middle Road's initial function was to link Crown Street with Lower Road - but it did more than that for in crossing Roxeth Common it

joined two communities; the inhabitants of Harrow on the Hill village and the people of Roxeth on the lower level. This probably explains its odd name, being the road in the middle of two villages.

The road developed initially during the second half of the 18th century and the early part of the 19th when it was known generally as Middle Row but as the 20th century approached it became established as a recognised road, capable of attracting a rather higher class of resident than those domiciled in the two adjoining villages. Further status was achieved when the original John Lyon School opened in 1876 (the builders being Titus Lander and William Woodbridge). Several other large properties were erected shortly afterwards, including the Red House (1883) and a group of four-storey villas at numbers 60 to 66 (1887-1890). Some earlier Georgian properties still exist, namely Roxeth Mead and Buckholt House. Messrs E. S. Prior and William and John Woodbridge built several houses in this road. The old Roxeth Post and Telegraph Office was located in a cottage in Middle Road and George Bentley owned the barber's shop at number 11.

We have referred on earlier occasions to the important role which the Harrow Hill community played in the parish and its surrounds during the 19th and early 20th centuries as a centre for local administration, banking, commerce, supplies and entertainment. Local farmers from the Grange, Grove, Wood End, Tithe and Parkers farms frequently drove to Harrow on the Hill, ascending via Middle Road, to bank their money, obtain supplies and on occasions, attend meetings with neighbouring farmers.

Meetings were periodically held to arrange Saturday hunts for the Middlesex farmers' drag hounds. Numerous local farmers participated and others came from more distant locations such as Stanmore, Bentley Priory, Elstree and Totteridge. Before the first world war London businessmen, like Steadall, Puckerford and Sainsbury were joining in the hunts.

The hunt met at different farms in turn and a periodical list of dates and venues was issued to the participants. For more distant meets, the grooms would take the horses on in advance and a fast runner called Dinky Bowls left about two hours before the hunt commenced to lay the scent with aniseed. The Master of the Hounds at that time was a Mr. Gosling who arranged the route - frequently over sections of the Wealdstone Brook to provide suitable jumps for the horses - and ensured that a generous supply of fresh meat was available for the hounds at the conclusion of the hunt. Everyone looked forward to these special Saturdays and even small boys on the farms earned valuable shillings 'holding horses' for the riders.

In the 1970's we find few changes have occurred in short, switch-backed Middle Road. On the right about half-way down the slope can be seen the newer buildings of the John Lyon School beyond which is a modern public house called the White Horse. on the other side is Roxeth Mead private school.As one approaches the lowest section of Middle Road, Victorian cottages line both sides of the highway. The last building on the left is the Half Moon Hotel at which point there is a purpose-built bottle-neck in the road to restrict traffic movement, and beyond this motorists must circumnavigate a new roundabout.

And so we arrive at the junction which was once the centre of the little village of Roxeth. This name first appeared in old monastic records over eleven hundred years ago when the land in the area came under the jurisdiction of Abbot Werhard. It was then spelt Hrocseath, meaning 'where the rooks drink'. Perhaps we shall be able to spend more time investigating this interesting area in a later volume.

Church Hill

HARROW SCHOOL

> "The School - I do not know whether the term admits of adequate definition.. it is rather a progression of souls through the centuries passing in a fellowship of which the Hill and its buildings are a focus and symbol to a wider life to be."
>
> Dr E D Laborde

Many books have been written over the years by well-informed authors, entirely devoted to the history of the world's most famous place of learning - Harrow School - and the paragraphs following these introductory remarks can make naught but a passing reference to this hallowed institution. Nevertheless our readers will expect and are entitled to, at least a modicum of information about the School - and we shall not disappoint them.

Adhering to our prearranged pattern of 'history by highways', Church Hill qualifies as the appropriate vehicle for the School story by virtue of the fact that the original School building is sited on its western flank. Having said that, the peculiar feature of Harrow School is, that the visitor cannot arrive at a given point on the Hill - and then stand back and gaze in wonder at a pile of ancient buildings within whose walls the future Prime Ministers of Britain are being educated. Harrow School is in fact the village, and the village is Harrow School.

A senior member of the present School remarked to our researcher, "It would be very nice to enter a gate, beyond which one would find a complete complex of buildings called 'The School' - as in the case of Rugby. Our various school houses where the boys are taught are scattered throughout the village - the majority being in the main highway, but", he added as an afterthought "this arrangement increases the interest of visitors who can see the boys at close range walking around the town, bound for various destinations where they eat, sleep and study."

The steady growth of the School over the centuries, combined with the absence of any large, flat sites on the Hill are probably the main reasons for the staggered formation of the buildings. There is however, an important group of School buildings at the northern end of the High Street and around Grove Hill which exist for various aspects of school life and provide venues for prayers, speeches, art and reading.

(It is interesting to note that the School which is frequently 'mentioned in the same breath' as Harrow - namely, Eton - is comprised of buildings spread along streets leading to Windsor in a similar, unplanned fashion.)

Let us now take a brief look at the School's history and the changing educational climate in which it has developed.

In the Middle Ages the sons of noble families and the gentry were educated in accordance with the dictates of their parents. Some remained in the manor houses to be taught academic subjects by a chaplain, sport by the forester and arms by an old retainer or

neighbouring knight. Others were boarded at a monastery under the care of the Abbot, or attended a small private school. Many sat in Grammar schools where, such was the Catholic influence that boys were forced to speak Latin out of school hours and those who failed to do so were severely flogged.

In the Tudor period the monied classes began to develop a fresh approach to education and it became fashionable for merchants, lawyers and yeoman to endow a new school; several were opened during Elizabeth's reign, a time which became known as 'the new learning'. Because the word 'Yeoman' has particular significance in our narrative, it may be worth explaining that this term was applied liberally to most middle class countrymen - usually farmers, who in later years often became freeholders, owning their own land. John Lyon - Yeoman Farmer - decided to endow a school in Harrow and, in this connection, mention of the relevant Charter has been made on earlier pages. His farm, incidentally, continued to function until the middle of this century when the land was sold for redevelopment.

Lyon died without an heir on 11.10.1592 and was buried at Harrow Church: sixteen years later, his widow Joan also passed away.

The first (west) wing of the Old School (to which access is gained from Church Hill) was completed in 1615 and just over two hundred years later (1819), C R Cockerell designed a matching east wing. An old fourth form room still remains intact but the building is now mainly a show piece.

John Lyon left carefully prepared statutes relating to school government which totally dispelled the possibility of girls being admitted but boys from distant towns (called 'Foreigners') were accepted provided a stipend could be obtained from them: local boys were admitted free. Despite indignant protests by local parents, free admission to Harrow School finally terminated when the Governors were given new powers under the Public Schools Act of 1868 and 8 years later the Lower School of John Lyon was built on land above the cricket field for middle-class local boys. Harrow School had now been entirely taken over by the sons of wealthy 'foreigners'.

Although the number of pupils had been increasing, there were many problems over the years, particularly from the latter period of the 18th century when the country was passing through a financial crisis. The shortage of money was reflected in the deplorable condition of most grammar and public schools: few trained teachers were available and accommodation was frequently inadequate. Discipline was failing and moral standards left much to be desired: the standard of school meals was appallingly low and bullies ruled the class rooms. The practice of "fagging", although lawful, was abused and floggings meted out by the senior boys were daily occurrences.

At the peak period of indiscipline, (which Dr George Butler eventually quelled) School numbers in Harrow fell from 295 to 128 and those who remained were to say the least, unruly. They indulged in somewhat ribald activities, including 'Jack-o-Lantern', a nocturnal paper-chase in which the hare, identified by a lighted lantern, lured his pursuers through every muddy pond and ditch on the route. Another pastime was bombarding newly appointed fags on the head at close range with hard bread rolls and the unfortunate boys were then expected to undertake the most menial of tasks in cold, dank, dark conditions.

In an atmosphere of rebellion and revolt, public schools earned the title of 'Nurseries of Vice' and with Victoria now on the Throne, a Royal Commission was appointed to study

conditions at Winchester, Eton, Westminster, Charterhouse, Rugby, Shrewsbury, St Pauls, Merchant Taylors and Harrow. Lord Clarendon led the enquiry which resulted in the introduction of a more flexible curriculum with less emphasis on classical subjects.

Doctor Thomas Arnold, Headmaster of Rugby School from 1828 to 1842, exemplified the manner in which discipline could be re-introduced and profligacy suppressed: he was instrumental in bringing about a much needed reform in the leading public schools.

During the 18th century, the annual Archery Competition on the Hill referred to on an earlier page, became the occasion for disorderly conduct by London crowds and in 1772, was abandoned in favour of official Speech Days. The latter event soon assumed great importance and in July 1857, was described in the Harrow Gazette as follows: "The attractive festival of Speech Day was as brilliant this year as ever. Swarms of old Harrovians ascended the dear old Hill... there was a large number of celebrities.... all is mirth, joyance and jollity on these occasions.... which causes every eye to sparkle, every bosom to beat with expectation, every heart to swell with a feeling of intense gratification and every tongue to break out in rapturous exclamations."

Thanks to the financial generosity of many people associated with the School, it continued to grow in both size (from 100 to 800 boys) and influence and more and more properties were purchased on the Hill by the Harrow Park Estate Trust for School use, including several mansions. Each one was used for boarding purposes and contained a master, his family, several servants and from 13 to 50 pupils.

This arrangement enabled the Trust to ensure that large open spaces, consisting of parkland, playing fields and gardens, were judiciously preserved, thus preventing large scale private development. When Roxeth Common was divided up, part of it was allocated to the school for the 6th form cricket field Currently, some twenty matches can be played simultaneously.

In addition to purchasing existing buildings (such as The Park and The Grove) a number of new School Houses were built including The Knoll (1867) Bradbys (1848) and Newlands (1888). Druries was enlarged in 1863.

The continued expansion enabled an increasing number of tradespeople to become established in existing roads from whence services and supplies were available. Local workers found employment with the school and cottages were built for them in new roads and terraces. The village lads benefitted from the presence of the school and were able to earn pocket money from the pupils, running errands, or carrying bags down the Hill to the station at the beginning of holiday periods. One old resident still living, remembers that as a youngster he delivered newspapers to the School houses, one sympathetic cook gave him an occasional tit-bit together with something which his mother would appreciate.

Even in modern times there are changes and improvements: for instance at the beginning of the academic year in 1976 a new dining room was prepared in the village for the boys of three houses where they now eat their meals centrally instead of in their own houses. This arrangement was greeted with indignation as it meant they will need to rise earlier in the morning if they hope to attend for breakfast....

This is not by any means the first occasion that an action by the school has failed to gain the approval of the boys. When a parental suggestion in the first quarter of the

19th century advocated that there should be an annual holiday for the pupils on the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, the Headmaster, Dr Butler, replied to the effect that "annual holidays are a dead weight upon Scholastic exertion.. ."

There are currently eleven boarding houses for a school strength of about 800 boys, who continue to wear the formal tail-coats and white straw hats introduced in earlier times.

Undoubtedly there will be more references to the school before this volume is completed but so much more could be said in this narrative if only space was unlimited. Pages could be written about the great succession of Headmasters who have ruled the school with varying degrees of success and of the many famous personages the school has produced from the ranks of its pupils, including military leaders, statesmen and poets. Seven British Prime Ministers - the last being the great Churchill, emanated from within these red-bricked walls.

Perhaps you - the reader - could not afford to add the name of your son to the roll of this famous school, but all the residents of the London Borough of Harrow equally share the status, the tradition and the inevitable pride, of living in the shadow of this great institution.

THE CHURCH OF ST MARY, HARROW

After that exposition about the school we continue to be located on Church Hill, a narrow highway which climbs away from the High Street with a 1 in 5 gradient. As the reader may observe from a sketch in the centre pages of this volume the 'Crown and Anchor' Inn was once sited below the original school building and on the same side is the Vicarage, rebuilt over a hundred years ago when earlier sections were incorporated.

As one climbs a pathway from Church Hill and passes through a lychgate which is dedicated to a former vicar, the Reverend John Cunningham, a close-range but elevated view of St Mary's Church can be enjoyed: this tapering structure is historically the most important feature on the Hill. The spire surmounts the great mound of Harrow and can be seen for miles around from almost every viewpoint.

Like the school, the history of St Mary's has all been told before but we shall attempt to pick out a few salient points of particular interest, in addition to supplying a few facts relating to the basic history of the Church.

After Archbishop Lanfranc began the building of a Norman Church in 1087 it was consecrated some seven years later by his successor, St Anselm. The only parts which now remain of the Norman period are the two lower storeys and the west door of the tower. A hundred years later a new chancel was built and early in the 13th century, Elias de Dereham was Rector of Harrow when a new nave, in Early English style, replaced the original Norman version. William de Bosco, Rector in 1324, founded a Chantry of the Blessed Mary which was swept away at the time of the Reformation.

In the middle of the 15th century a herculean task was undertaken by the Rector, John Byrkehede, master builder, who supervised the removal of the nave roof, replacing it with one of richly carved timber. During the same period the tower was raised by a further storey, the spire built and the south porch erected.

In the middle of the 19th century Gilbert Scott undertook a programme of renovation and restoration which included work on the chancel, refacing the Church exterior with flint (with the exception of the tower), substituting the old wooden north porch with one of stone construction, and adding the north chancel chapel and vestry.

The Norman appearance of the Church was enhanced by the addition of battlemented parapets.

In the last decade of the 19th century, plans to undertake further alterations were shelved in favour of launching an appeal to provide funds for a new organ. Messrs Lewis and Company of Buxton installed the mechanism, incorporating such parts of the old organ "as they considered desirable" at a cost of £1,436, it was dedicated by the Bishop on 1st May 1902 and Dr G R Sinclair, organist of Hereford Cathedral, gave a recital of music. A major overhaul of the organ was carried out by Messrs Duckworth and Draper in 1971.

The Church is exceptionally rich in brasses including two of the Flambard family (on the chancel floor) and one of John Lyon and wife· there are also several interesting monuments for the visitor to view

Three other special features are the Font of Purbeck marble, an oak chest - both of 13th century origin, and the 17th century carved wood Pulpit presented by Arnold Tanner

Not far from the Church can be seen the graves of several Harrow School headmasters, the tomb of John Peachey where Lord Byron sat for hours as a schoolboy, and an interesting slate stone beside the path between the south door and the terrace, bearing an inscription which tells of Thomas Port's fateful accident in 1838, one of the very earliest tragedies which occurred on the railway.

There are many churches in Harrow, but St Mary's is the highest, the oldest and the most historical and a walk through the churchyard in the cool of the evening, when the magnificent views all around are fading into the dusk, will imbue one with a feeling that this holy site is in all senses above the puny, greedy world in the valley and will survive for all time, come what may.

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Grove Hill

This is a very sharp hill which drops away with a one in seven gradient. Until the final quarter of the last century, it was the only route on the northern slope of Harrow Hill by which villagers could descend to the lower level but much earlier users were the occupants of the old Rectory Manor, believed to have stood on the same site as an early 18th century house called The Grove - from which this steep highway takes its name. If the Manor House did exist on this site, the Rector would have been empowered to hold his own Courts, as a representative of the Archbishop.

In 1524 it was prophesied that great floods would engulf Harrow and Prior Bolton built a tower in this area on which he intended to take refuge. But the floods did not come and he looked rather foolish.....

The Grove of the 1700's changed hands several times and was owned for many years by the Northwicks. The house was occupied by Richard Brinsley Sheridan about 1780, who, as writer and politician, gained considerable fame only to die destitute in 1816. The only modest tribute to him was a group of outhouses known as Sheridan's Stables now supplanted by classrooms.

In the third decade of the 19th century The Grove was purchased by Harrow School but suffered destruction by fire in 1833: it was later rebuilt.

In the latter half of the 19th century several properties were constructed on Grove Hill, including Rendalls, Grove End, White Tops (Grove Hill Cottage), Elmfield and Grove Hill House. The art school was built on the west side in 1896, a number of Harrow schoolboys are boarded on this Hill which at the lower end has a junction with Tyburn Lane.

Peterborough Road

In 1879 this road was opened as a public highway - which is rather fortunate for the modern motorist, who may find the old Grove Hill less suitable for descending to the lower regions of Harrow Borough.

Numerous large Victorian houses were already lining the flanks of this sharp hill before it became a public highway and they include Hillside, The Knoll and Garlands, all built by C F Hayward in the 1860's. Two other properties of late 19th century construction are by Arnold Mitchell.

To the east of Peterborough Road, halfway up the Hill, is the covered miniature Rifle Range and it is here that Harrow schoolboys are taught to shoot and to achieve a desirable level of markmanship.

Very many of the names which identify buildings and highways, both on the Hill and in other areas of the Borough are those of famous Headmasters who were dedicated to Harrow School over the years. One such Head (we have previously mentioned) was Doctor George Butler who made his presence felt for a whole generation of boys beginning in 1805. He was instrumental in adding the eastern extension to the Old School buildings and it was to him that the Bathing Place owed its origin (mentioned in a later narrative).

But he was also Dean of Peterborough after whom the highway we are discussing was named. The land on which this road is built was given by the executors of the Dean - and by Lord Northwick.

Twenty years after the Road had been opened the first fatal accident occurred at the bottom of Grove Hill; a warning notice at the top, under the heading of 'Take heed', has been displayed on a wall since 1969.

The motorist will have no opportunity to study the scenery from whichever direction he may be proceeding - but on foot Peterborough Road can provide an enjoyable vista, more easily observed on the descent.

As one leaves the village and passes between the imposing school buildings at the summit, stately Victorian houses flank the road but they give way to a more open aspect on both sides, pleasantly softened with an abundance of trees and hedges.

A set of traffic lights may now prevent traffic crossing Tyburn Lane for a few moments but Peterborough Road then continues on for a further distance until it joins Station Road, Harrow. There are several businesses and shops on both sides of this last stretch of the Road.

Mount Park Estate

In the early part of the 19th century, there lived a wealthy land owner called Samuel Hoare (not to be confused with a gentleman of the same name who was a Custos of Harrow School between 1848 and 1885). before enclosure he owned over 200 acres in Roxeth, Northolt and Wembley. Between Sudbury Hill and Northolt Road the area was known as the Mount Pleasant Estate.

Hoare built a large house between 1807 and 1817 which became known as The Mount from 1849; it is located on the estate at the junction of Sudbury Hill and Mount Park Avenue. Between the dates 1865-1876 Mount Lodge was erected on the corner of these two highways but following the death of a lady named Hannah (probably Hoare's widow), the estate was advertised for sale by auction in 1876.

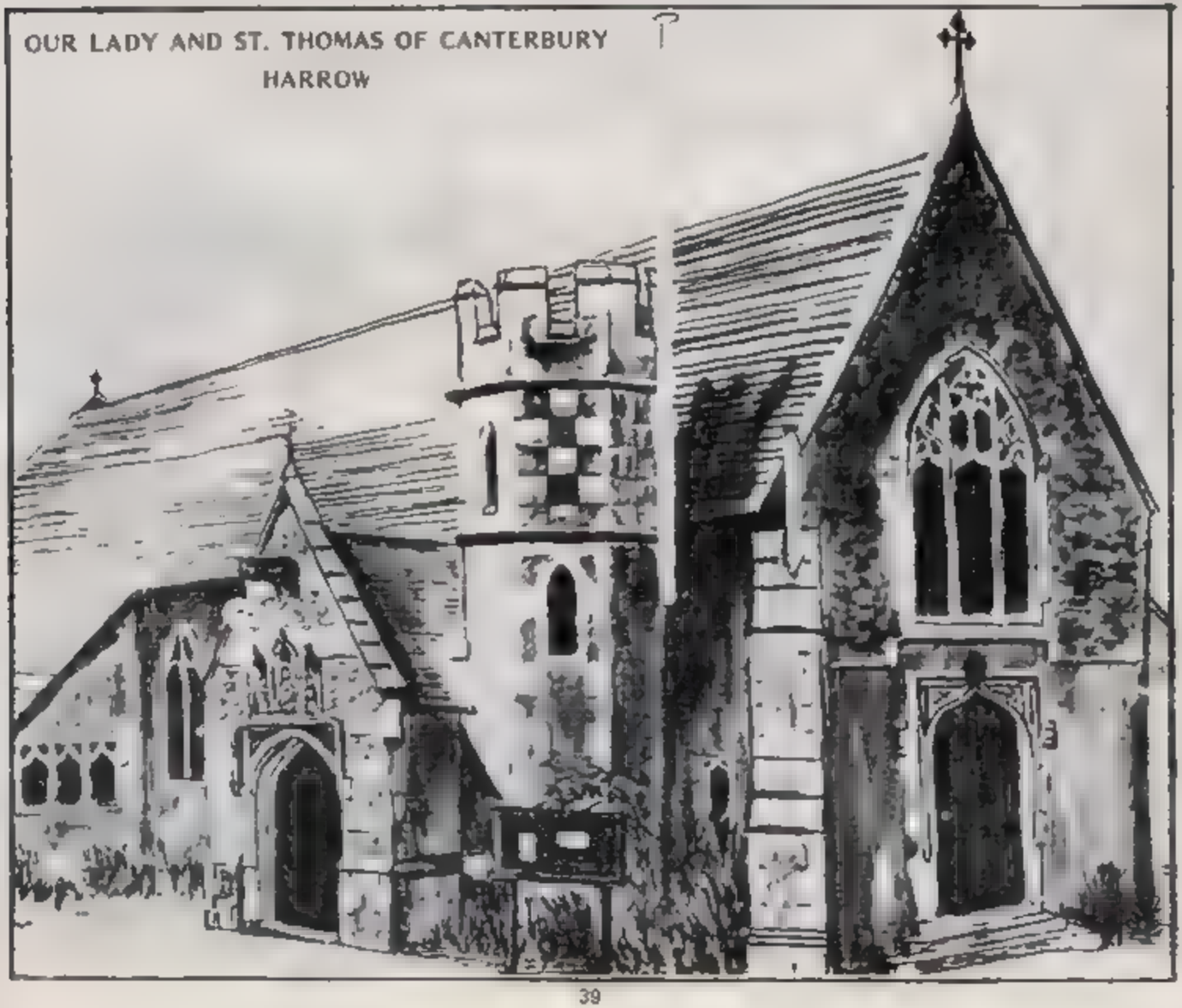
The estate was re-auctioned only a year later and eventually the land was sold off in plots, frequently to affluent professional people who built big houses on these sites and then moved in to settle on this select southern slope of Harrow Hill. But there is another intriguing story linked with the Mount estate which we shall now briefly unfold.

When Henry VIII severed his religious connection with Rome in 1534, the far-reaching and disastrous effects which it had upon the Catholic religion in Britain are only too well known. In our 'Historical Preamble' we referred to the occasion in 1545 when Archbishop Cranmer gave the Manor of Harrow to the King who then granted it to Sir Edward North. The Rector of Harrow at that time was an unpleasant individual named Doctor Richard Layton who took great pleasure in desecrating monasteries - and, not surprisingly, Catholics disappeared from Harrow Hill - to remain inactive for over 300 years. In 1873 a Catholic Mission was installed in Roxborough Park by Cardinal Manning and further reference to this event is included in a later narrative about that area.

The Cardinal invited a group of nuns from the Third Order of St Dominic in Belgium to come to Harrow and this coincided with the second auction of the Mount Park Estate. the Dominican Sisters subsequently occupied The Mount and Mount Lodge (early in 1878) when a girls boarding school was opened The Mount stables, which were converted early this century to house teachers, became known as St Dominic's Lodge. It was subsequently sold and renamed, first Canford and later, Armstrongs (see reference in Sudbury Hill narrative). It is now a Harrow School property.

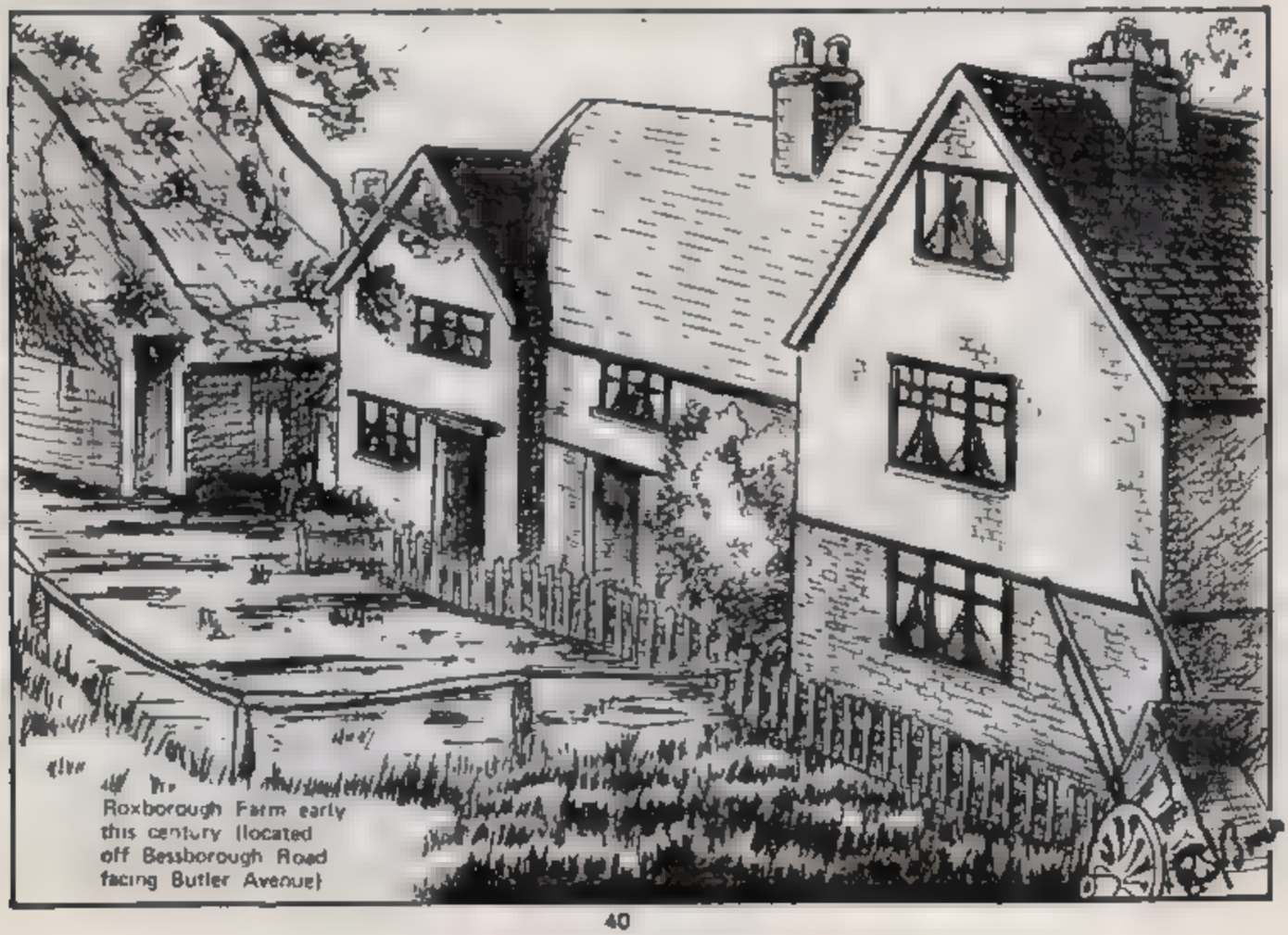
Continued on page 41

HIGH STREET HARROW ON THE HILL MIDDLESEX 1876 John Stanaway.



OUR LADY AND ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY
HARROW

The King's Head and Green in the early nineteen-twenties



Roxborough Farm early this century (located off Bessborough Road facing Butler Avenue)

The Mount was now established as the main Convent building, standing in 11 acres of ground which included a Beacon Tower, also used as a classroom. This was reputed to have been built on the site of a former beacon intended to blaze forth a warning to the City of London in the event of the Spanish Armada approaching our southern shores. The tower was demolished in 1968.

A beautiful private church called 'Our Lady of the Rosary' was built for the Convent in Mount Park Avenue in 1921 and seven years later the first portion of St Dominic's Grammar School was completed on the western boundary of the Convent grounds. The school was enlarged in 1937 and now provides places for 400 pupils. During the war the Convent narrowly escaped serious damage when several bombs fell in the vicinity.

The Mount Lodge had been let for residential purposes throughout this period but from 1948 (when the boarding school was closed) it was used as a guest house. In the 1960's it became the main Convent building, currently housing ten Dominican Sisters. The house called the Mount, located behind the Lodge is now unfortunately empty and delapidated.

And so, due to their resilience and dedication, Catholics finally returned to Harrow Hill.

Building on the remainder of the old estate has been carefully restricted during the past century and it is not easily apparent that such a rural, tree-lined group of highways - including some marked 'Private' - are hidden away in enviable seclusion so close to the main road. Mount Park Avenue is the access road to this area and among the large Victorian properties to be seen are Beechbank (built early in the second half of the 19th century) and Thornlea (1871). The land falls away sharply on the right and a road called Georgian Way plunges down the slope: the view from here is of panoramic dimensions.

On the left is Mount Park Road which farther on divides into two spurs, facing west and south. An extensive Victorian House called Oakhurst, situated in four acres of ground, is now the environment for the Purcell School of Music which moved from Hampstead at the end of 1975. Other Victorian properties in this highway include Bermuda House (1887), St Margarets (1895), The Oaks (1893), Egerton (1883/4) and Roselyon (1884). Handsome modern properties now cluster around a small side road called Ingleby Drive.

An impressive, extensive House called Avendia Lodge (formally Charnwood), nestles behind a screen of trees at the entry to the west spur of Mount Park Road: this narrow passage, flanked by grass verges, fences and an avenue of trees, disappears towards Penketh Drive. The other spur slopes away to join South Hill Avenue.

Despite the decimation of the old estate, Mount Park has lost none of its majestic and exclusive Victorian aura and a recommendation has been submitted to the Council to regard it as a new conservation area.

Roxeth Hill

Roxeth Hill was formally known as London Hill - presumably because it formed a junction with London Road on Harrow Hill. Its later title gave credence to the fact that

it ended in the heart of the old Roxeth Village but this community has now been virtually obliterated, sharing the same fate as Greenhill village which was once situated on the route from Harrow to Wealdstone, but has now disappeared.

As this is yet another highway connecting the elevated Harrow Hill community with people on the lower terrain, inevitably there is a steep gradient which sometimes imposes difficult driving conditions on the modern motorist and must have caused appalling problems a hundred or more years ago for horse-drawn vehicles, and men with hand-carts, attempting either the climb or the descent during inclement weather.

Prior to the middle of the 19th century, ineffective road surfaces were a serious problem in this country (except on main highways) and although John Loudon McAdam, a Scottish engineer (1756-1836) had begun to revolutionise highway construction before Victoria came to the Throne, a Mr William Howie complained in the Harrow Gazette (December edition, 1857) that, "When road making in England, loose stones are thrown on the surface to a depth of three or four inches, adding fearfully to the labour of horses, while in France they have an effectual way of saving their road metal, horses, carriages and tempers by passing a stout roller over the new material until it is equally pressed in place. The roller is passed and repassed - until it is as smooth a d solid as the old road."

The function of this Hill became increasingly important from the mid- 19th century and in response to the population increase three very necessary buildings were erected on the flanks of the gradient. First on the northern side, a school was built in 1851 to be followed in 1862 on the opposite flank by a place of worship - Christ Church - so named in deference to this region's medieval connection with Canterbury.

Ten years later a small cottage hospital with nine beds opened in Lower Road under the supervision of local trustees: this was the first of a series of medical establishments in this vicinity of the Hill which culminated in the erection of the existing Harrow Hospital built in 1907 at a cost of some £5,000: currently, the hospital deals with geriatric cases.

A local architect who lived on the Hill for many years played a significant role in the design of local buildings. His name was Samuel Pointon Taylor and amongst his projects were The Grange in South Hill Avenue, the British Legion headquarters in Northolt Road and several cottages on Roxeth Hill. he lived for a time at No 58. Other names connected with the building of properties on this Hill were Ernest Tozer, D W Handley, Gilbert Scott (Christ Church) and Arnold Mitchell (the Hospital). Their work in the past has been of a quality to gain for Roxeth Hill the sought-after designation of 'Conservation Area'. The extremities of Roxeth Hill - where it joins London Road on the higher level, and Northolt and Lower Roads at the base, have proved to be somewhat hazardous junctions in the 1970's. A hundred years ago vehicle activity would have been limited to the occasional farm cart or bicycle - those days have gone for ever but the problem of adapting former village roads to modern traffic conditions remains.

SCHOOL

CHURCH

Roxborough Park

In the earlier pages of this volume we have briefly dealt with highways located in most of the regions on Harrow Hill: the High Street which straddles the crown of the Hill was our main subject but in addition we have described the old routes on the west side (West Street and adjoining roads), those on the southern slope between Roxeth and Sudbury Hills and the north eastern descent which follows the route of Peterborough Road. There are no through highways on the eastern slope which consists in the main of Harrow Park, Harrow School playing fields and other open spaces. Only the northern aspect remains to be described, including the old Roxborough Park area, which is the subject of this narrative.

The main highway on this slope is known by the old district name of Roxborough Park: at the lower end it adjoins Lowlands Road and before the gradient becomes sharply inclined, an exit is available into Roxborough Avenue (leading to Bessborough Road). It then begins to laboriously climb the hill but about halfway up, comes to an abrupt halt, giving way to a pathway on Church Hill. From this location the Norman church is virtually poised in the sky! To the right, old gravestones are planted on terraces of grass and the ground behind, facing down the hill, slopes away with frightening severity.

Roxborough was first mentioned, historically, in 1334 when it was probably a small hamlet near the base of Harrow Hill's northern slope. As in the case of Roxeth, our old friends the rooks are again associated with this name which means Rooks' Hill or Barrow (the modern dictionary describes the latter word as a 'tumulus' or 'ancient sepulchral mount').

In the mid-18th century the present Bessborough Road was known as Roxborough Lane and a farm was situated within the triangle now formed by the aforementioned Lane, together with both Roxborough Park and Avenue.

At this time the Hill was surrounded by dozens of farms, which were to become more efficient and affluent during the next hundred years. By 1851 there was a staggering figure of over 215,000 farms in Britain covering nearly 25 million acres, of which some 80,000 ranged in size from 100 to more than 1,000 acres. The small squires of earlier days had been bought out by larger land-owners and many of the fine manor houses were converted into tenant farmhouses.

As the end of the 19th century approached, large villas were built in Roxborough Park and eventually, increasing development in the 20th century 'swallowed up' the farm and the old tracks became roads. Now, the villas and other large Victorian properties are giving way to numerous modern detached houses and blocks of flats (the most attractive of which is Sheridan Place).

Modern blocks of flats also extend into Roxborough Avenue and two small side roads (one of which is still unmade) display a mixture of architecture which could be described as both ancient and modern.

In an earlier narrative about Mount Park estate on the southern slope, our research revealed a strong Roman Catholic element is existing among the local inhabitants and now, at the opposite end of the Hill, that discovery is repeated.

We have previously explained that (although hidden from view from this angle), St Mary's Church towers above the Roxborough Park area but three hundred yards below, on the corner of Roxborough Avenue, is a Catholic place of worship - the Church of Our Lady and St Thomas of Canterbury. Built in 1894, St Thomas's is barely 80 years old, and yet in recent times has developed a serious structural fault, which will be explained later.

Although Catholic emancipation was occurring in the early part of Victoria's reign (as a result of more tolerant attitudes towards non-protestant denominations), by the third quarter of the 19th century, there were still only six Catholic churches in Middlesex and devout followers of the faith in Harrow travelled seven miles by horse and cart in all weathers to Hendon, where the nearest RC church was located.

In 1873 a small Catholic congregation attended services at an iron church in Roxborough Road and an old Harrow schoolboy, Archbishop Manning, preached at the opening ceremony. With considerable foresight, Father Hardy (a distant relative of Captain Hardy who fought at Trafalgar) purchased the land in Roxborough Park - at that time surrounded by fields and muddy tracks. On this land a new church was built (in the time of Father George Graham) dedicated to the tragic Thomas Becket who visited Harrow as a youth in 1143, to return twenty years later as Archbishop of Canterbury where he was later murdered for defying the king. Three and a half centuries later his bones were dug up and burned by Doctor Richard Layton, mentioned earlier in this volume.

With the birth of Harrow Parish in 1918, St Thomas's was enlarged in subsequent years and a new school built. Progress continued until 1966 when the grim news was revealed that, due to a fault in the ground, the church was slowly sliding down the hill. After much heart-searching and worry while cracks in the walls were ever-widening, new foundations were installed and a complete renovation undertaken in 1975 - at a cost of £170,000.

• • • •

Before we move on to these final paragraphs, brief comparisons between the legislation relating to highways both now and in the distant past will be especially applicable at this juncture. Much of the legislation in modern times is directed at the road users - from the private motorist to the heavy goods vehicle driver. Before the 20th century it was concerned to a greater extent with horse traffic and what we now describe as the pedestrian. In the nineteen seventies, a fairly rare instance of drunkeness will be dealt with by magistrates, normally incurring a fine, but four hundred years ago, anyone found loitering on the highway in an inebriated state would be regarded as a vagrant and punished by being severely flogged - or burnt on the right ear.

A hundred years ago, when there were fewer roads than now, footpaths were the subject of much legal deliberation. Such paths could not be closed or diverted without an order of Quarter Sessions and any proposed changes would be first viewed by two Justices of the Peace. After a Surveyor's Certificate had been issued and the land-owner's permission granted, notices were inserted in the press and at either end of the footpath in question for a period of three weeks. The approval of the Parish vestry was also necessary.

Footpaths still exist on the Hill and on the lower levels; some cross the land between Football Lane (off Peterborough Road) and what is now the Watford Road (formally a continuation of Sheepcote Road). On the far side of Watford Road is the Harrow School bathing pool, once a muddy pond surrounded by fields of buttercups and called the 'Duck Puddle' or 'Ducker'.

At the base of the northern slope is a remnant of a famous highway - now sandwiched between the Lowlands and Kenton Roads - reminding us of the grim public execution place located at (the now) Marble Arch site until 1783, where Middlesex criminals and murderers met their fate. The very name has an ominous ring about it - Tyburn Lane.

An area to the north west of Harrow Hill, still on the lower level, is comprised of a group of highways built just prior to the first world war which pronounce their recognition of the great School on the Hill in no uncertain manner. They are named after a succession of famous men associated with the School; in particular several head-masters including Benjamin Heath, Robert Carey Sumner, Joseph Drury, George Butler and Charles Vaughan. This area, known as the Bessborough Estate, dates from 1898.

On the heights of Harrow Hill numerous small turnings have failed to qualify in this volume for a special narrative but we have just sufficient space to mention West Hill, a pleasant little road which breaks away from Byron Hill. It can boast of several interesting properties, built during the first half of Victoria's reign. The narrow confines of Waldron Road (commemorating a builder of that name) can be explored from the High Street near the Harrow Hill post office One historical authority concerned with this area described it, one hundred and thirty years ago, as being 'badly drained and like a ploughed field'.

We must apologise to those residents of other minor highways on the Hill who may have scanned these pages, looking for a reference to their own particular road. But these unmentioned places may be discovered by readers of this volume who have been encouraged to venture up the wondrous Hill to satisfy themselves that all the complimentary things we have said are really true. Their journey will not be wasted....

The Harrow Hill Trust

No survey of Harrow Hill written in modern times is complete without a reference to the Trust - an independent group of people who are concerned with the preservation of the Hill's historical image. It describes itself as 'an amenity society whose main objects are to preserve, protect and develop features of historic and public interest in the area of Harrow on the Hill and to promote high standards of planning and architecture in that area'.

A supporter described the objects of the Trust in more detail, explaining that members would welcome a reduction in the vehicle noise and numbers without actually closing the Hill to traffic. The proper use, or restriction, of various traffic and commercial signs are considered and there is concern for the adequate maintenance of public alley-ways, stairways, pavements and walls: any interference with the general character of the village is resisted. The preservation of trees is very important and flower tubs are placed at strategic positions and window boxes supplied to senior citizens.

The Trust maintains that whilst the greater part of the Borough of Harrow has been built up during the 20th century, the history of human settlement on the Hill can be traced back for twelve hundred years: the village has, nevertheless, succeeded in retaining its identity among the often anonymous suburbs of Greater London.

Inevitably there are varying opinions about the methods which should be employed to solve, in particular, the traffic problems and in 1976 a questionnaire was issued to residents by the Trust in an attempt to analyse the views of local people. The Council, the private residents and the tradesmen are the three main groups with differing interests whose final unification on all aspects of the problem may prove to be difficult.

During 1976, numerous vehement observations appeared in both the local and national press, generated by the various sections mentioned above. Typical comments included "Angry traders about the sprawling Harrow School buildings in the ancient High Street have banded together to protest about a one-way traffic plan which, they say, will cut their takings" - and - "Harrow on the Hill has been dying for several years now and I would like to know whether they (the Trust) wish to speed up this rot."

Traffic congestion, on-street parking, the use of the roads by heavy lorries and the inadequate bus service are four of the aggrevations which remain to be solved.

Any opinions which may have been expressed in the text of volume 6, relating to social or civic matters on the Hill are generally those expressed by one of the afore-mentioned groups and it is not the intention of the author or the sponsoring association to advocate or support any particular approach to the problems. The right to decide upon the future of the Hill should remain the prerogative of those most concerned and let us hope that, ultimately, solutions acceptable to all will be duly adopted.

ADDENDUM

(Based on information supplied by R W Thomson)

HISTORICAL PREAMBLE (Page 6) The place-name Harrow comes from the Saxon word 'hearg' (temple or shrine). In 'The Place-names of Middlesex' it is suggested that there was a site of ancient heathen worship here, perhaps where the present church stands on the summit of the hill.

It seems unlikely that a manor which had been in the hands of the Archbishops of Canterbury for over two hundred years before the Conquest would have been without a church and it is known that there was a priest with a holding of 120 acres at the time of the Domesday survey.

THE HIGH STREET (Pages 13 and 15) The existing building called Flambards was preceded by a more extensive property - which was at one time the largest house in the Parish - to the south of its modern counterpart, behind a wall which bordered the High Street opposite the Kings Head. The wall was demolished in 1866 and replaced during the following five years by the existing row of shops.

The local authority's original offices on the Hill were occupied by the Harrow Local Board of Health built in 1868 at 49, High Street. Subsequently, the Urban District Council was installed in offices above the fire station until new premises were opened on 3rd March, 1914.

MIDDLE ROAD (Page 31) The Prior family (several of which attended Harrow School) were closely associated with this Highway and the adjacent area. Edward S Prior was an architect concerned with numerous local projects in the 1880's, including alterations to the Red House and Lyon Villas at 60-66 Middle Road. He was also responsible for Harrow School Music Room and Laundry, the Mission Hall in West Street, Bermuda House Billiard Room in Mount Park Road and Manor Lodge in London Road (now demolished). His mother opened a school at Roxeth Mead in Middle Road which Edward's spinster sisters continued; his brothers were occupants of both the Red House and Byron House.

CHURCH HILL (Page 33) Although, as previously mentioned, John Lyon died without an heir, he did have an infant son called Zachary who is buried with his parents in St Mary's Church. He was originally included in the brass (mentioned on page 36) but this part of it was damaged while being removed from the church floor.

ROXBOROUGH PARK (Page 43) The highway called Roxborough Park was formally known as Roxborough Park Road and it follows the line of an old footpath. Only one of the original Villas, at 1-3, Roxborough Park, still remains.

Corrections to Volume 5

Page 10 (Para. 3) This paragraph should have commenced, "As the traveller begins to descend Stanmore Hill....."

Page 13 (Para. 4) Laurie and Barbara Carswell were the last proprietors of the Fountain Inn - not the Cox family

Page 44 PRINTED SOURCES OF INFORMATION The date of the Harrow Observer should read - 10th October, 1975.

General Information

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Demant 17 March 2023